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SHALL THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ABANDON IT'S HISTORIC POSITION

A PLEA FOR COMMON HONESTY

EXPOSING

THE ATTACK OF DR. ERNEST TRICE THOMPSON, OF UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, UPON THE STANDARDS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

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A FOREWORD:

The statements and facts herein set forth are made with a solemn realization of their potential far reaching significance. Serious charges are made against a popular and able Seminary Professor, Dr. Ernest Trice Thompson. **If these charges are true, his popularity and ability make them the more serious.** If these charges are untrue, I shall have done an able teacher a grave injustice. I have earnestly endeavored to be fair. To that end and to avoid any possibility of inaccuracy because of misunderstanding or potential, though unintentional, misquoting by the students of his class room who disagree with his statements or methods of presenting those statements, **I have confined all quotations herein set forth to the WRITTEN STATEMENTS OF DR. THOMPSON HIMSELF.**

I have not consciously taken any quotation out of its context. In every case I have cited where each quotation used may be found so that the interested reader may determine the equity of its use. **It is the considered judgment of many of the ablest, and acknowledged leaders of the Church that the maintenance of the historic position of our Church, on many great fundamentals, is involved in the issue herein set forth.**

The charges here made will grieve the friends, fellow faculty members, and admirers of Dr. Thompson. From them I ask nothing except that they read carefully, impartially, and fairly before they pass judgment upon either Dr. Thompson or the writer. Having done so, I shall rely upon that intelligence, fairness, and fearlessness which has characterized the ministry of the Southern Presbyterian Church from its foundation to judge justly, decide fairly, and act fearlessly. If I have charged unjustly, I merit your unstinted condemnation. If I have charged justly, **I shall and do rely upon your sterling integrity to place the honor of the Church you love above the normal and commendable impulses of personal friendship.**

I herein in no way intentionally impeach the sincerity of Dr. Thompson in the positions which he holds. I go further and declare that I believe him to be sincere in the **doctrinal positions** which he personally supports.

I do not question the reputed high standard of his personal life and attitude. Those who know him best, and whose judgment is worthy of full faith and credit, so declare and I accept their declaration as true. However, there have been and are many admirable and great souls **who do not accept the historic positions of the Southern Presbyterian Church as their personal views and religious philosophy.** The question herein raised is not whether Dr. Thompson is able of intellect or attractive in personal character but **"do his doctrinal views of the Scripture and of our Standards conform to the historic positions of OUR Church?"** If they do not—**then surely he has no just place in the faculty of a Seminary of the Southern Presbyterian Church.**

It is here contended as both basic and fundamental that Southern Presbyterian Church Theological Seminaries were created and are supported to produce preachers **who hold and support the interpretations of Scripture and doctrine which this Church has historically held.** These students should,

of course, be informed as to all important schools of thought but be led, **by professors who earnestly believe and sincerely accept our interpretations of Scripture and doctrine,** into a sound and abiding understanding of the reasons for our faith **AS A SEPARATE CHURCH. Otherwise there can be no justification for the existence of our Seminaries and the expense or labor incident thereto.** I submit, however, that Dr. Thompson's positions as herein below set forth are at devastating variance with the historic and **heretofore declared** positions and interpretations of our Church as to the great doctrines involved.

I have complete sympathy and would ask the utmost patience and consideration for any earnest student or pastor who is baffled by doubts or struggling with any of the great doctrines held by the Church which he loves. While his public utterances should be confined to that great mass of Scripture and doctrines which he can and does approve, in his sincere and earnest personal search for Truth he merits our patience, our prayers, and our supporting fellowship and help. Dr. Thompson is not a pastor but **is called to direct and mould the approach of our ministers of the future in their attitude toward the Scripture and doctrines of our Church.** It is herein maintained that he **openly and actively supports** doctrines and interpretations of Scripture which are foreign to our interpretation of the Faith. I do not question his right to sincerely hold the views which he declares. **I do, however, unequivocally declare that he has no right in morals or honor to hold and disseminate those views as a Professor of a Seminary in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S.**

The quotations herein set forth are not from a technical exposition or treatise. They are from weekly Sunday School expositions for the **normal Church Member.** As such, the language used merits and must be construed to mean what a **normal reader** has a right to understand would be **the normal interpretation of the language used.** The reader here may disagree with this writer "here" or "there" in the quotations cited but in many instances it is submitted that the direct contradiction or inescapable inference or deduction permits of no disagreement **when measured by the Standards of our Church or the admitted historic interpretations thereof.**

Two vital issues are at stake:

1. The preservation of certain fundamental and cardinal doctrines of our Church and the historic interpretations thereof.

2. The preservation of the sacred record of our Church for **JUST PLAIN COMMON HONESTY.** Our Confession of Faith and the known and accepted interpretations thereof **should and must conform to the teaching in our Seminaries or this teaching must be made to conform to our Confession.** The fact that one is sincere in his teaching, which is not in accord with our Standards and their historic interpretations, **in no way changes the fact that our Church cannot KNOWINGLY PERMIT this to continue and maintain its sacred HONOR.**

If the charges herein made are supported by the facts as taken from Dr. Thompson's own pen, then he should be immediately removed from his position as a Professor. Should he then continue to publicly propagate

these and similar views outside the courts of the Church, he should be removed from the rolls of the ministers of the Church by resignation or by due and lawful process. On the other hand, should I be adjudged as having willfully and unjustly maligned and defamed Dr. Thompson herein, **then it is I who should be arraigned and receive your justly merited judgment therefor.** No man has the right to make the accusation herein made and not suffer the just consequences thereof **if they are untrue.** The statement here and the statement which follows are made without bitterness or personal animosity as far as I know my own mind and heart. I have laid the facts therein stated before the Church because of the sincere conviction that the historic position of a great Church is at stake. I am unwilling that the testimony of our great Church **should go by default without a protest.** I have done so realizing the seriousness of the charges made. I have, in writing, twice requested Dr. Thompson for a personal conference at which these matters might be discussed and his position thereon cleared. I have advised him that should he be vindicated in such discussion, I would pledge to him the use of all means within my power to dispel the unrest which his writings and utterances have caused and to clear him of the criticism which these views have provoked. I have suggested that he associate with him in such conference such persons as he might elect. My one condition has been that there also be present, at my expense, a competent professional court reporter in order that there be an accurate record thereof for him, and for the Church. I have requested that he come to Charlotte as my guest for the trip or that he receive me in Richmond with one or, at most, two interested, concerned, and leading members from supporting Synods of the Seminary for such a conference. **These requests Dr. Thompson has both refused and denied.** Being thus unable to at least endeavor "off the record" and by private conference to correct or clear up this matter of vital and far reaching importance to the Church, it is herewith **laid before you as the custodians of the Faith of the Church which we love.** (T. G.)

(All heavy type and capitals used above and in the statements that follow are by the writer and for the purpose of emphasis.—T. G.).

THE BACKGROUND OF THE RECORD WHICH FOLLOWS

At the General Assembly last May, I suggested that a contemplated Committee to investigate the subject of "Dispensationism" in our Seminaries also investigate the question as to whether the teaching on the vital subject of "Inspiration" in the Seminaries conformed to the historic position of our Church on this important doctrine.

Dr. Ben R. Lacy, Jr., of Union Seminary at Richmond, vigorously opposed such an investigation by the Assembly. Dr. Lacy insisted that any such investigation must be made through protest to the Trustees of the Seminary or to the Presbyteries of the members of the Faculty.

In correspondence with Dr. Lacy on July 4th, he advises: "On Constitutional grounds, I object to an inquisition by the General Assembly" and again on July 15th he refers to: ". . . the unconstitutionality of an inquisition by the General Assembly when that body has only the powers of review over the actions of our Board of Trustees . . ."

(It will be recalled that two of the supporting Presbyteries of Union Seminary recently entered formal protest against the lectures of Dr. Emil Brunner at Union, where he expounded a doctrine of Inspiration which these Presbyteries felt differs gravely and basically from the historic position of our Church).

The question being publicly raised, I felt Dr. Lacy would welcome, rather than oppose, such investigation as might be desired by any regularly constituted Court of the Church upon so vital and important a subject. It would appear that he is definitely in error as to the right and power of the General Assembly to make such investigation should it so elect. In support of this position, I would cite the Book of Church Order (1938 Edition) Page 47, paragraph 90 — which defines the "Powers of the General Assembly" as follows: "The General Assembly shall have power to receive and issue all appeals, references, and complaints regularly brought before it from the lower Courts; **to bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice injuriously affecting the Church;** to decide **all** controversies **respecting doctrine** and discipline."

It will be noted from the above that the General Assembly has three distinct classes of specified powers: (a) to decide "Appeals, etc."; (b) **to testify against "errors in doctrine, etc.";** (c) to decide "all controversies respecting doctrine, etc."

The power "to testify against errors in doctrine" **inescapably carries with it the power to investigate and ascertain whether the alleged error exists against which it should testify.** This power, as above stated, **is separate and distinct from its jurisdiction on "Appeals."** Any other interpretation of this power to "testify," **destroys the power itself.**

It is Dr. Lacy's responsibility to determine the wisdom or unwisdom of protesting the exercise of that power so far as his institution is concerned. From the language of the Book of Church Order quoted above, however, there can be no question but that the power to make such an investigation by our highest Church Court, the General Assembly, **actually exists.**

After Dr. Lacy's protest, the matter was not followed up at that time on the floor of the Assembly, **in the hopes that the correction desired could be handled in private conference with Dr. Lacy and "off the record."**

The outstanding instances prompting the original suggestion lay in the teachings and writings of Dr. Ernest Trice Thompson of the Union Seminary Faculty. May I state at this point, **and state unequivocally,** that my entire relations with Dr. Thompson in the past have been pleasant throughout. **I have never known him with intimacy, but there has never been any personal issue of unpleasantness of any kind prior to the correspondence incident hereto.** I make this statement here in order that it be absolutely clear that the issue herein raised is **basic** and **not** personal between Dr. Thompson

and myself. I do not question the high personal regard which many of Dr. Thompson's friends and associates hold for him. However, I submit for the reader's decision that this high **personal** regard in no way affects **the utter seriousness of the facts and positions herein set forth!**

These facts cannot be satisfactorily disposed of by theoretical or elaborate explanations. The writings and teachings of a Seminary Professor **must bear the normal and reasonable interpretation** which **a normal and reasonable person would assume to be the intended interpretation of the language used.** The fact that his writings and teachings have for a long time aroused both suspicion and doubts as to his attitude toward the historic positions of our Church on some of its great fundamental doctrines is both significant and serious. **The attitude of a Seminary Professor toward the great doctrines of the Church he serves should be, like Caesar's wife, "ABOVE SUSPICION."**

As matters of serious moment are best handled face to face, **I requested that Dr. Thompson be present at the conference held with Dr. Lacy some time after the meeting of the Assembly.** He was unable to do so. Twice since I have endeavored, **without success,** to secure a conference with Dr. Thompson, in Charlotte or in Richmond, in order to clear up such statements by him as those herein below set forth.

In the conference held with Dr. Lacy, he felt that many of the questions raised should be referred to Dr. Thompson rather than that he (Dr. Lacy) should presume to give Dr. Thompson's views thereon. However, **being unable to secure a conference with Dr. Thompson,** and realizing that **relatively few of our Ministers have occasion to follow his writings on the Sunday School Lessons,** I have set forth herein some of the quotations therefrom which prompted my suggestion at the recent Assembly.

As the question herein raised potentially involves the continued testimony of our Church as to its historic interpretations of some of the fundamental doctrines for which the Church has stood since the days of its founders, **I earnestly trust that the data which follows will receive your careful consideration.**

COMMON HONESTY AS A CHURCH and fairness to the homes that send their sons demands that the teaching in our Seminaries conform to our Confession or that we amend our Confession to conform to our teaching. The statements herein set forth from Dr. Thompson's own pen, and the related sections of our Standards and of Scripture, merit the reader's serious consideration, together with definite action by our Church with regard thereto.

If the frank statement of Dr. Thompson's record, as written by him and declared by many who know him, should cause him to be considered a "martyr" or tend to "martyrize" him before the Church, **then we, as a Church — ARE TO BE PITIED INDEED!**

Union Theological Seminary has a glorious heritage of loyalty to the Word of God and to our great Confession of Faith. There is a **growing feeling** in the Church that **that great record is now in danger. Surely every**

real friend of the Seminary will rally to any effort to keep the Seminary's teachings **pure!**

THE HISTORIC POSITION OF OUR CHURCH

In the references to Dr. Ernest Trice Thompson which follow, I refer from time to time to "the historic position of our Church" and "the historic interpretations" of its fundamental doctrines. At the outset I would clearly state that, **although I personally accept these positions,** they are cited not as **my** positions but **"the historic positions of our church."** I assume **no personal authority** to determine the Church's position. I declare, however that any intelligent Minister or Layman, who has in any way studied the matter, can discern from the statements of the founders of our Church and their successors, **as to what our Church has declared to be its historic position.** I quote here from a Conference held with Dr. Ben R. Lacy, Jr., President of Union Theological Seminary, which conference was held in Charlotte, N. C., on June 27, 1940, and which Conference was taken down by a professional Court Reporter.

MR. GLASGOW: "Am I correct, Doctor Lacy, that Doctor Hodge and Doctor Warfield, who I believe are ot Princeton Seminary, in their treatment of the question of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, were followed by Doctor Dabney, Doctor Peck, Doctor Strickler, and the other early founders of the Southern Presbyterian Church?

DOCTOR LACY: "I would not say that Doctor Dabney followed **anybody:** Of course, he couldn't follow Warfield, because Warfield came after him, I think. I couldn't answer you in regard to Peck; I never studied under Peck and have only read his Anthology. Strickler, I would say, was very sympathetic with Warfield's position. Doctor T. C. Johnson was definitely of the Warfield School; and Doctor Smith, who is the most recent Professor of systematic theology and a cousin or relative of Doctor Warfield, also required of his students, required **all** his students to read Warfield on Inspiration, and leaned very strongly in the direction of Warfield. I don't think Doctor Smith ever taught that; I can check on that."

I presume that the reader is familiar with Doctors Hodge and Warfield and their positions on the authority and inspiration of the Scripture. The views of these two great Theologians on these subjects are considered as in complete harmony for all reasonable and practical purposes. **Since Dr. Lacy confirms that Doctors Strickler, Johnson and Smith — the three last Professors to hold the Chair of Theology at Union, followed Warfield and taught his views to their students, I feel that it is fair to assume that Warfield sets forth "the historic position of our Church" and "the historic interpretations" of those positions.** I cite here several of the pertinent quotations which come from the pen of Dr. Warfield. The reader is no doubt familiar with these and the many **clear and unequivocal** declarations of this great Theologian on this important subject:

QUOTING FROM: Reprint of "THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE."

By Benjamin B. Warfield.

(Pa. 4): "What this Church-doctrine is, it is scarcely necessary minutely to describe. It will suffice to remind ourselves that it looks upon the Bible as an oracular book — as the Word of God, in such a sense that whatever it says, God says — not a book, then in which one may, by searching, find some word of God, but a Book which may be frankly appealed to at any point with the assurance that whatever it may be found to say, that is the Word of God."

(Pa. 12): "The Church has always believed her Scriptures to be the book of God of which God was in such a sense the author that everyone of its affirmations of whatever kind is to be esteemed as the utterances of God, of infallible truth and authority."

(Pa. 15): "How shall we account for the immediate adoption of so developed a doctrine of inspiration in the very infancy of the Church and for the tenacious hold which the Church has kept upon it through so many ages? The account is simple enough, and capable of inclusion in a single sentence; **this is the doctrine of inspiration which was held by the writers of the New Testament and by Jesus as reported in the Gospels. This Church-doctrine of inspiration was the Bible doctrine before it was the Church doctrine, and is the Church doctrine only because it is the Bible doctrine."**

(Pa. 18-19): "Every attempt to escape from the authority of the New Testament enunciation of **the doctrine of plenary** inspiration, in the nature of the case begins by admitting that this is, in very fact, the New Testament doctrine."

(Pa. 21): **No, the issue is not "What does the Bible teach?" — but "Is what the Bible teaches true?"**

(Pa. 36): "The question is not whether the doctrine of plenary inspiration has difficulties to face. The question is, whether these difficulties are greater than the difficulty of believing that the whole Church of God from the beginning has been deceived in her estimate of the Scriptures committed to her charge — are greater than the difficulty of believing that the whole College of the apostles, yes, and Christ Himself at their head, were themselves deceived as to the nature of those Scriptures which they gave the Church as its precious possession, and have deceived with them twenty Christian centuries, and are likely to deceive twenty more before our boasted advancing light has corrected their error — are greater than the difficulty of believing that we have no sure foundation for our faith and no certain warrant for our trust in Christ for salvation. **We believe this doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures primarily because it is the doctrine which Christ and His apostles believed, and which they have taught us. It may sometimes seem difficult to take our stand frankly by the side of Christ and His apostles. It will always be found safe."**

DR. E. T. THOMPSON'S OWN RECORD

I have contended herein: (a) that Dr. Thompson holds views **contrary to the historic positions of our Church;** (b) that he **interprets loosely his vows** as a Minister and a Professor **according to the normal and historic interpretation of those vows;** and (c) that he interprets the Scripture **in a manner contrary to the historic position of our Church** as **THE ACTUAL WORD OF GOD,** having God's **FINAL** authority and (d) that he presents these views in a manner **normally calculated to confuse** his readers and students.

In his "Reply to Dr. R. A. White" (of Mooresville, N. C.) in the May 19, 1939 issue of the Presbyterian of the South, Dr. Thompson states: **"My own attitude toward the Bible is clearly reflected,** I hope, in the Sunday School lessons that I have been writing now for about fifteen years."

In the limited space available, let us here examine Dr. Thompson's **"attitude toward the Bible"** as **"clearly reflected"** in some of these writings to which he here refers. (All references are from Dr. Thompson's treatment of the Sunday School Lessons.)

DR. THOMPSON'S VIEW OF "INSPIRATION"

It is submitted that the quotations given below reveal a very serious state of affairs. Behind all these quotations is the **ROOT ERROR** in Dr. Thompson's point of view. This **ROOT ERROR** is his position on the Inspiration of the Scriptures.

Here the evidence is cumulative. I ask that the reader ponder the following quotations and their far reaching influence.

Having to do with quarrels between Christians: **THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEWS SAYS:** (Matthew 18:16-17).

16. "If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouths of two or more witnesses every word may be established.
17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, take it unto the Church, but . . ."

DR. THOMPSON SAYS: (January 3, 1940) **"If the words of Matthew 18:16-17 were actually spoken by Jesus,** they cannot be taken as a rule that must always be followed.

(Please note: **"If the words of Matthew 18:16-17 were actually spoken by Jesus . . ."** What on earth does this **"IF"** mean in the writings of a Seminary Professor, in which writings **HE advises us that his statements "clearly reflects"** his **"attitude toward the Bible!"** Also, after he **assumes** that this passage from Matthew **may be** authentic, **where is Dr. Thompson's authority** to state that these words **"cannot be taken as a rule that must be always and invariably followed"!!** Are we—**and especially our Seminary Professors**—at liberty **thus boldly** to question such a passage of

Scripture and then, when **conceding** that **possibly** Jesus did say **what Matthew plainly states,** to declare the Master's positive injunction is to be modified as we may decide or elect!)

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH SAYS: (Chapter 1, Paragraph 2), "(naming the books of our Bible **including Matthew):** All of which are given **by inspiration of God,** to be the rule of faith and life . . ." — and (Chapter 1, Par. 8): "The Old Testament in Hebrew . . . and the New Testament in Greek . . . **being immediately inspired by God . . ."**

Again, I quote with amazement!: **"IF** the words of Matthew 18:16-17 were actually spoken by Jesus . . ."!!

AND AGAIN:—

The problem of divorce is unquestionably a major problem in our nation and home life today.

CHRIST SAID: (Matthew 5:32): "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery, and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery."

DR. THOMPSON SAYS: (April 11, 1934): "Does it follow from Jesus' words that Christians should never seek to be released from the marriage bond, except on the grounds of infidelity? . . . It would seem to be more in accordance with the whole genius of the Christian religion which **sets ideals before us rather than rules** to be blindly and slavishly followed that **in such cases Christian people are entitled to seek and to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit."**

(Has Christ here set forth a **"blind and slavish rule?"** Are we to assume that "the guidance of the Holy Spirit" **will lead to some rule other than Christ's "rule"** as set forth above.)

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH SAYS: (Chapter 24, Par. 6): "Although **the corruption of man be such as is apt to study argument, . . . yet nothing but adultery** (Mat. 5:30) **and such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by Church or Civil Magistrate (1 Cor. 7:15) is cause sufficient to dissolve the bonds of marriage; . . . and the persons concerned in it, NOT LEFT TO THEIR OWN WILLS AND DISCRETION IN THEIR OWN CASE."**

(This is from the Confession of Faith which Dr. Thompson accepted in his sacred vows and **claims that he still accepts and holds sacred.** Read again what **he** says and what **the Confession says.** Do they seem to the reader to coincide or rather does not the **DIRECT CONFLICT between the statement of Dr. Thompson and the statement of the Confession of Faith amaze** you as coming **from one of your Seminary Professors?)**

AND AGAIN—

Having to do with the use of force by Christ to accomplish his will and the possibility of a Christian bearing arms in case of war:

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN SAYS: (John 2:13-16):

13. "And the Jews' passover was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

14. And found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting;

15. **And he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables.**

16. And to those who sold doves he said, take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise."

DR. THOMPSON SAYS: (January 17, 1940): "We may note in passing that there is no mention of the whip in the "Synoptic Gospels." It appears only in John's account (John 2:14-16) who places the event at the beginning of Jesus' ministry rather than at the end. The original Greek in John's account, as reflected in the punctuation of the American Revised Version, indicates that even on this occasion, Jesus used the whip not on the men but on the beast. In other words, **there is no evidence at all to indicate that Jesus used physical force to expel the money changers from the Temple.** There is certainly no indication that in case of war he would be willing to handle a musket . . ."

(Does Dr. Thompson above seem to indicate that **John might be wrong** about "the whip" since the Synoptic Gospels "make no mention of the whip" and place this in a different period in Jesus' life? This illustrates **the inferences and innuendoes in Dr. Thompson's writings which many FEEL ARE SO DEADLY to the historic position of our Church as an Inspired Bible!)**

Space forbids here that I cite the numerous instances where Jehovah sent Israel into war and personally directed the procedure and actions to be taken. But what does the Confession of Faith say, **which Dr. Thompson solemnly accepted?**

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH SAYS: (Chapter 23, Par. 6): "It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of Magistrate, when called thereunto . . .; so, for that end, **they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions."**

(Our Nation's plight today is to a large extent due to the deadly Pacifist propaganda **in the name of the Church**—which propaganda—certainly in our Church—**is at variance with the teachings of our Confession as a Church.**

AND AGAIN—

Dr. Thompson (April 7, 1939) ascribes the authorship of Isaiah — not to one, not to two, but the **THREE** different authors and (on September 13, 1935) adds the statement, **(astounding in the light of his free acceptance** of Chapter 1 of the Confession on the Inspiration and authority of Scripture!) —"As Professor Rogers puts it, 'Isaiah, **of course,** has the chronology **ALL WRONG, but so do the prophets regularly' . . ."**

AND AGAIN—

Concerning the Gospel of Matthew, **DR. THOMPSON SAYS** (Sept. 20, 1939) ". . . The best scholarship today indicates that the **Book was put together** in its present form about 85 AD., approximately 55 years after the crucifxion. The author had at his disposal (1) the early Gospel of Mark based largely on the preaching of Peter (2) a **collection** of Jesus' sayings (called "Q" by scholars for convenience sake) and (3) materials from various other sources . . . Luke also made large use of Mark and "Q" in writing his Gospel though he **had independent sources** of his own, **and it is this inter-dependence of the three Gospels THAT EXPLAINS THEIR STRIKING SIMILARITIES."**

(I would ask the reader—how is that for a profound **(?)** interpretation of the historic and sacred view of the Church on Inspiration of Scriptures!!! **Compare it with the simple and sublime language of II Peter 1:21: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men; but Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.").**

AND AGAIN—

Concerning the passage spoken by Christ: "See that ye despise not one of these little ones. For in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in Heaven." **DR. THOMPSON SAYS** (Dec. 13, 1939): "The idea of our text that the little ones have their angels in Heaven is used by Christ as a **currently accepted Jewish belief, not to sanction the idea of guardian angels, but to illustrate His thought that children are** especially dear to God . . ."

AND AGAIN—

On March 6, 1940, commenting on the statement of the awe-stricken Centurian at the cross, "truly this was the Son of God"—**DR. THOMPSON SAYS: "This does not mean that he had come to the conclusion that Jesus was Divine . . ."**

THE VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

THE BIBLE SAYS (Isaiah 53:5): "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

OUR STANDARDS SAY: (Larger Catechism—Answer to Q. 49): "Christ . . . having also conflicted with the terrors of death and the powers of darkness **felt and bore the weight of God's WRATH,** he laid down his life an offering for Sin." And (Shorter Catechism—Answer to Q. 27) "Christ's humiliation consists in his . . . undergoing . . . **the WRATH of God.** * * *"

These Catechisms **are a part of our Standards** which Dr. Thompson in his letter to me of July 4th states . . . ". . . the vows which I took as a Professor in the Seminary I am ready to affirm at any time.")

DR. THOMPSON SAID (May 31, 1933): "We must not say that He felt himself guilty, or that He **was punished** or **that He was exposed to God's WRATH,** for all such language involves an intolerable confusion of what is possible for the sinful and the sinless."

(This is a DIRECT CONFLICT in statement concerning "The Wrath of God." Either Dr. Thompson is right or our Standards are right. This is a matter of EITHER—OR. Such teaching by a Seminary professor goes to the very heart of the teaching of our church and cannot, with safety, be tolerated).

AND AGAIN:—

Commenting on Mark 10:45: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many,"

DR. THOMPSON SAYS (Jan. 10, 1940): "To give His Life meant not simply to lay it down but to devote it to the service of mankind, including if need be, as He foresaw, would in His case be needful its surrender in death. His life, sealed by His death, would, He saw, **tend to rescue** or save humanity from the great danger with which it was faced."

Quoting from Merrill, of New York, with obvious approval, he continues: "Christians have had naturally and rightly so exalted an idea of the uniqueness of the sacrifice of Christ in His death that they have tended to see Him on the cross in lonely isolation. But, as a famous New Testament scholar once declared, there is not a reference to the cross in the Gospel which does not hold it up for the disciple no less than for the Master." So here, "Jesus speaks of how He came to give His life a ransom for many. But He speaks of it as **illustrating a general ideal** for all of the children of God. "Even as,"—He says—"we are to sacrifice—to serve, to give our life, even as He did. That is our ideal, high, stern, impossible, save for the grace of God. God give us grace to make it truly our ideal." (Contrast this **"general ideal"** with the Church's historic treatment of **the judicial aspect of Calvary** and Christ's **unique and peculiar substitutionary atonement for man's sin!)**

THE FALL OF MAN

OUR STANDARDS SAY: (Larger Catechism—Answer to Q. 21): "Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God, in eating the forbidden fruit . . ."

DR. THOMPSON SAYS (March 31, 1937): Commenting on Genesis 3:6: ". . . the woman gave also unto her husband and he did eat," Dr. Thompson writes as follows: "How are we to understand this story? Is it to be taken as a literal fact, **or is it to be interpreted as an allegory?** We cannot afford to be too dogmatic. **It may be** that we have here the

story of man's fall **as it actually happened,** that is, Satan spoke to man through the mouth of a serpent, as today he sometimes speaks through the mouth of a friend. It may be, on the other hand, that we have the essential facts, dramatically, **pictorally presented as in the case of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness . . .**"

(Dr. Thompson, with astounding frequency, projects what **has been historically treated by the Church as sacred, autoritative history, AS AN ALLEGORICAL RECORD!** Also, do we find the founders of our Church, and their theological successors at this Seminary, in this casual way, referring to Jesus' temptations in the wilderness as "essential facts, **dramatically and PICTORALLY presented"** as another of Dr. Thompson's "allegories!" I submit that this style of presenting these sacred events **is a distinct departure from the historic position of our Church.** Dr. Thompson may feel that he can "explain satisfactorily." Is it desirable that a Seminary's Professor should so **continually express himself** in a manner which changes **our historic interpretations of a simple and glorious supernatural narrative so that "explanations" are forever in order!).**

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

THE BIBLE SAYS, in the first chapter of **Matthew,** verses 20-23, that the angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, saying concerning Mary:

"Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, (Isaiah 7:14): 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son' . . ."

DR. THOMPSON SAYS (September 20, 1939): Referring to Isaiah 7:14, "the prophesy in Isaiah about the virgin with child certainly did not refer primarily to the miraculous birth of the Saviour. It referred, as can be plainly enough seen from the context, to a child that was to be born in Isaiah's own day, to a young woman, **not necessarily a virgin . . .**"

AND AGAIN:—

In this issue: "And after they had heard the King, went their way and lo, **the star which they saw in the East went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was." DR. THOMPSON SAYS:** "This of course, is a poetical description. **It was not the star that actually guided them to Bethlehem** but the direction of the chief priests and scribes. Perhaps after being obscured for a while, the star shone out with a new brilliance as they entered the sleeping village."

AND AGAIN:—

In this issue, **DR. THOMPSON SAYS:** "All this, Matthew says, took place in order **'that it might be fulfilled.'** We note again that the Old

Testament passages referred to are not prophecies in the regular sense. The first two are rather striking resemblances, **PERHAPS providential resemblances,** between Israel's history and the history of Israel's Messiah." (He had already advised us in this issue that "Gould says" that this phrase 'that it might be fulfilled' **has no purpose beyond that of pointing out some similar Old Testament occurrence** or drawing the attention of the reader to some Old Testament fact, **suggested to the evangelist by the subject in hand." (?)**).

THE MIRACLES OF THE BIBLE

Having to do with the healing of the Gadarene demoniac:

LUKE SAYS: (Chapter 8:26-34):

26. "And they arrived at the country of the Gardarenes, which is over against Galilee.
27. "And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.
28. "When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God, most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.
29. "For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him; and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.
30. "And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name; And he said, 'Legion'—because many devils were entered into him.
31. "And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.
32. "And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain; and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.
33. "Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.
34. "When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country."

DR. THOMPSON SAYS (February 12, 1936): (Here Dr. Thompson quotes Dr. Gould **without** adverse comment and obviously with approval. The standard rule of literature is **"where one quotes another without adverse comment he is presumed to quote with approval").** "The man replied 'my name is Legion' and then speaking on behalf of the demons, earnestly besought Him not to send them into the abyss. Gould says this request can be explained only as part of the hallucination of the demoniac, to be

referred possibly to his terror of city and town, and his unwillingness to be driven out of the solitary, wild district haunted by him . . . The suggestion implies the popular common belief that demons as incorporeal beings, must have an animal organism of some kind, but not necessarily a human one if they are to remain contentedly on earth, as distinct from some incorporeal sphere whether above or below. . . Jesus' part in granting their request was purely permissive. He said no word enjoining what the man suggested on the demons' behalf. Possibly he meant simply to sooth the man by formal acquiescence, without sanctioning their belief as to the swine. The swine were **frightened no doubt by the loud shrieks and wild gestures of the MANIAC.** The account gives no indication that Jesus was responsible, and we have no right to read that into the story. . . **As we have seen, there is no reason to think that Jesus foresaw much less caused the destruction of the swine."**

(I repeat, to me, that is an amazing comment by a Professor in our leading Seminary, to which we entrust our choice young men from Godly homes who love "The Old Book ! ! !").

AND AGAIN:—

Having to do with the Book of Jonah:

DR. THOMPSON SAYS: (June 19, 1940). Here Dr. Thompson gives a column and three-quarters to the "great fish" instance in the Book. The first one-third of a column is given to the—at best—**equivocal statements** regarding the possibility of the incident that ". . . The writer would reply that all things are possible with God, and it would be presumptuous for us to say the miracle could not be performed. . ." **He then devotes more than a column to the "allegory" theory of this event.** ". . . The time has passed when one's belief in the historicity of Jonah and the whale can be made a test of his orthodoxy. . . Others point out . . . there is no historical confirmation of the conversion of Ninevah, or exact historical details in the book itself, that some of the miracles **are grotesque and useless."** (After a column of such "higher criticism" Dr. Thompson makes the interesting statement: "The writer of this article does not care to argue the parabolic nature of Jonah!"

(In that case, my earnest question is: "Then what on earth **WAS** he doing in this column and a half supporting the allegory theory? Why does he not come out clearly and state his evident position on this question?")

THE AUTHOR OF II KINGS—(Chapter 14:25)—**in simple narrative form**, definitely **declares that Jonah was a historic character. CHRIST SAID: in simple narrative form** (Matthew 12:39-41) that Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale and again **in simple narrative form** (Luke 11:32) that the people of Ninevah **"repented at the preaching of Jonah! ! !"**

(Wherein lies the doubt of Dr. Thompson, **our Seminary Professor,** whose vow accepts an inspired Scripture? What does he mean by "inspired?" How does he interpret his "vow")?

AND AGAIN:—

DR. THOMPSON SAYS: (April 7, 1937) Commenting on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Dr. Thompson quoting Dr. S. R. Driver, **without adverse comment,** states:

"It is a plausible suggestion that the physical cause of the destruction was an eruption of petroleum occasioned by an earth-quake, etc., etc. . . ." (then follows one-third of a column of **naturalistic explanation** with no comment by Dr. Thompson sustaining the historic sovereign destruction by the direct hand of God. Further, Dr. Thompson **does not even suggest** that this naturalistic **"toning-down"** interpretation **which comprises Dr. Thompson's only explanation** of this historic event came about **by God's plan and direction.** This type of explanation of the supernatural events of Scriptures **has existed in "liberal" and "higher criticism" circles for a long time but surely has not been the historic approach of our Church to these great events).**

And so on, and on, and on, **insinuations, inferences, innuendoes** — not always necessarily at variance with our historic teachings on the Scriptures but **raising questions** which he does not answer **and in a manner that is distressing to scores throughout the Church.** This would be distressing from anyone, and **especially as coming from one of our leading Seminary Professors** to whom we send our boys and from which Seminary **approximately 50 per cent of our Pastors come.**

Space forbids that we cover here the many and varied departures from the historic positions of our Church. Conceding his sincerity in what HE believes, **THIS IN NO WAY ALTERS THE FACT THAT his beliefs REVOLUTIONIZE THE HISTORIC POSITIONS OF THE CHURCH and the interpretative approach thereto on these great doctrines and beliefs.**

I have quoted above directly from Dr. Thompson's personal writings only. **I AM PERSONALLY ADVISED BY RECENT STUDENTS THAT HIS TEACHINGS FOLLOW THE SAME VIEWPOINT WHICH HIS WRITINGS HERE REVEAL.**

Assuming that Dr. Thompson believes these great fundamentals of the Faith, it is obvious that his methods of expressing that belief are devastating in their ambiguity and distressing in the confusion presented to the average reader **in the normal interpretation** of what he has written. Surely the leadership of our Seminaries should be clear and unequivocal in its utterances on these great fundamental doctrines.

We are told that this demand that Dr. Thompson retire from the Seminary is because he favors **openly** Union with the U.S.A. Church and the Federal Council of Churches, and the resentment of his article regarding the Auburn Affirmation in which many of his readers were led to feel he was defending that Affirmation. To me this is **HARDLY WORTHY OF ANSWER!** Dr. George Summey, formerly of Austin Seminary,—a grand Christian and man—favors joining the Federal Council and **has debated it vigorously at many meetings of the Assembly. HE** is nevertheless beloved and respected by the whole Church! Prominent churchmen and church

leaders have written favoring Union with the USA Church, and have **written ably and frankly thereon.** I have heard of no personal attacks on them!

There are **DEBATABLE ISSUES** upon which men **who accept a whole Bible and hold sacred the historic interpretations of their vows MAY HONESTLY AND SINCERELY DIFFER.** I submit, for the reader's decision, that the **record, AS WRITTEN BY DR. THOMPSON,** and set forth herein above **is NOT debatable or desirable for a Professor in our leading Theological Seminary.**

Concerning the Auburn Affirmation, I submit that should one of our Seminary Professors express himself in **uncertain terms** which **even indicates** he favors that document, **that this of itself alone should merit an investigation of his views!**

It is proposed by the defenders of Dr. Thompson that equal prominence should be given the **"sound"** utterances of Dr. Thompson as are given the **"unsound." I HAD SUPPOSED that it would be normal for the CHURCH to ASSUME that ALL of the positions and published statements of ANY OF OUR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY PROFESSORS on the great fundamentals of our Church and the historic interpretation thereof WOULD BE "SOUND."** If this **is** a **normal assumption,** we are concerned here only with the **"unsound"** and the seriousness of this unsound leadership **which becomes the more serious because of the admitted capacity of the professor!**

It is proposed that we should **poll all students who have studied under Dr. Thompson.** I would be equally or **MORE INTERESTED in the views of those who have not felt the magnetism of his personality, but who, with SEASONED JUDGMENT, ARE THE BETTER ABLE TO WEIGHT THIS FAR-REACHING DRIFT to liberalism which the facts revealed in the above quotations set forth.**

Polls usually declare **"popularity"** more than **"considered judgment." A FACT is not changed by "polls."** The reader may judge for himself as to the **fact** established by these, Dr. Thompson's writings, which he declares **"CLEARLY REFLECT" his attitude toward the Bible. This is the record HE has written—not "what someone said."**

Dr. Thompson has many friends. I leave with those friends, in the light of his own record as herein set forth, as to whether that friendship and his admitted gifts and good qualities shall be held as more sacred than **the HONOR of the Church they love and the fair and NORMAL interpretation of the sacred oath which we all, as ministers and officers, have taken.** My pride in and respect for the Ministry of the Southern Presbyterian Church is second to none. **I appeal to that traditional HONOR which is theirs,** that we face this serious question—**"Does this teaching by Dr. Thompson conform to the historic position which has been held and declared for our Church from its beginning?"**

We are told that Dr. Thompson's capacity as a teacher enables him to helpfully cope with the "materialistic" and "intellectual" approach of some

of the seminary students today. **Is the compromise of an INERRANT plenary inspired WORD-OF-GOD not too dear a price to pay to accomplish this?**

It is my earnest hope that many young men, **coming from Union,** who have been "blurred" on the great doctrine of **finality of inspiration** will eventually find their way into the fullness of a "whole Bible" **(WHOLLY inspired of God himself, as they learned it "from their mother's knee")** and free from the constriction of the "intellectualism of Higher Criticism" such as I have set forth above. As in their preaching, they come to set forth the **HEART of GOD** instead of the **intellect of man,** their messages take on a new and virile power!

TO SUMMARIZE:

(1) I have here submitted **Dr. Thompson's** own record as written **by him** and declared **by him** to **"clearly reflect"** Dr. Thompson's true **"attitude towards the Bible."** This is not heresay" or what "somebody said"—**They are Dr. Thompson's own statements.**

(2) I have set forth some of the clarion declarations of Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield, who Dr. Lacy declares was followed by Dr. Strickler, and Dr. Johnson, and whom these Professors of Theology at Union, together with Dr. Smith who followed them, required all of their students to study and master. I submit that this unequivocally establishes the "historic position" of our Church on these vital issues.

(3) I have set forth **in direct contrast** the statements of the Bible and of our Standards **for direct comparison with the statements and obvious and necessary inferences from Dr. Thompson's own statements.**

(4) We are a "Confessional Church." **We declare our unqualified, normal, and sincere acceptance of that Confession.** Unless we desire to support the positions of the Southern Presbyterian Church, **we are free to go to the Church of our choice. Simple honesty with the World and with our homes, who send their sons to our Seminaries, demands that our teaching conform to that Confession. These homes have a right to believe that our Seminaries and Professors teach the historically known and accepted interpretation of THAT Confession.** This is not "theology"—**it is just plain common honesty!**

(5) I have declared that evasion, equivocation, and ambiguity, have no rightful part in the methods of teaching employed by our Seminary Professors. The Church has a right to know, and if necessary to investigate through its Courts, and ascertain what **IS** being taught in our Seminaries, and the fundamental policies being followed. I again maintain that the Assembly (and I believe a supporting Synod or Presbytery) has a right to make such investigation as it sees fit, and that Dr. Lacy's declaration is an amazing declaration: **"On Constitutional grounds, I object to an inquisition by the General Assembly."**

(6) I have set forth **FACTUAL DATA** which supports the charges against Dr. Thompson as evidencing our obligation that we request **that he be immediately relieved from his position of influence as a Professor.**

I submit to the reader of this record and the searching facts set forth therein, as to whether this specific request that Dr. Thompson be immediately retired from the Faculty of Union Seminary is our duty (1) for the safety of the young men who go to this great Seminary and (2) for the honor of the name of the Church which we love.

In conclusion, may I repeat the clarion declaration of Warfield, whose teaching has been the historic position of our Church from Strickler and Johnson and Smith: **"It may sometimes seem difficult to take our stand frankly by the side of Christ and his apostles. IT WILL ALWAYS BE FOUND SAFE! !"** Because it is a difficult and **unpleasant task**, shall we wait until these historic positions have been intentionally (or unintentionally) **underminded and destroyed FROM WITHIN** or shall we arise in the power of a great Church which I am persuaded **is still overwhelmingly sound on these basic fundamental doctrines!** It matters not **that the proponents of this change are sincere, able or profound. THE NET RESULT IS THE SAME!!**

As a Sovereign Church, it is our privilege at any time to change any or all of our declared doctrines and to ascribe and approve such interpretations as we may elect. **However, no sovereignty in God or man can WITH HONOR declare certain doctrines and the accepted interpretation thereof and then, while publicly still declaring these doctrines and professing to hold themdear, KNOWINGLY PERMIT a new interpretation thereof to be officially taught and sponsored—which new interpretation essentially changes the vital fundamentals thereof. THE INTERPRETATION OF ANY DOCTRINE DETERMINES THE HEART OF THE DOCTRINE ITSELF.**

If we are to amend the historic positions of our Confession, **let that amendment come in the constitutional way provided therefor** and not through the indirect method of teachings and writings of an influential Seminary Professor who has thus departed from the interpretations of Scripture and Vows as they have heretofore been historically held by our beloved Church.

Were Dr. Thompson a younger man and there were **any reasonable probability** that he would return to the historic position of our Church, the situation might be different. Dr. Thompson **is a mature man.** These have been his views **for a long time.** The issue herein set forth **is a vital issue. I would urge** that earnest and devoted ministers bring before their Presbyteries and Synods, proper and fitting resolutions regarding Dr. Thompson, and that **said resolutions be transmitted to the Administration and Board of Trustees of Union Seminary.** I repeat: The fundamental involved is not "theology" alone. Just **PLAIN COMMON HONESTY leaves to us no other course. Our teaching and our Profession must agree or we stultify the Church we love!** From the record herein set forth — **A RECORD TAKEN FROM HIS OWN PEN, I submit — DR. ERNEST TRICE THOMPSON SHOULD GO!**

One further word. The doctrinal positions of any Church **must find their defenders among the ministry of that Church.** The Laymen are not theologically trained. It should be and is the high privilege of the Layman to uphold the arms of the Pastors in the spiritual work of the Church. It remains, however, their solemn and sacred duty, through the diligent and honorable pursuit of their respective daily vocations, to provide the human means essential to the daily operation of the Church itself (which in the Southern Church in 1939-40, covering all local expense and local and general benevolence, was between eleven and twelve millions of dollars). Furthermore, the Elder does not have the continuity of attendance of the Church Courts to enable sustained action in such matters as are herein set forth. Illustrating with myself, as typical of the Elder attendance as a Commissioner in the Church Courts, I will normally attend Presbytery once every four years and Synod once every fifteen years! For these reasons, together with the specific training of the Ministry, we of the Eldership and the pew **MUST LOOK TO YOU — OUR MINISTERS** — as the **logical and historic DEFENDERS of the FAITH** which is both dear and sacred to us all. **It is not enough that you are sound and true to that Faith in your pulpits.** When the very citadels of our Faith are subjected **to subtle and open attack,** it **IS TO YOU that we turn for THE TRAINED LEADERSHIP** in the defense of that Faith and the historic interpretations thereof which have endeared it to our hearts and made its testimony a power throughout the Southland and the whole world. Your Presbytery or Synod may not be identified with Union Seminary, however, **the graduates of that great institution go to the entire Assembly.** The burden and danger herein set forth **affects the whole Church alike.** Being advised of the facts herein set forth, I have every confidence **that many virile young ministers,** as well as many who are seasoned and mature, will step forth boldly in defense of the Church which you love and now faithfully serve. **GIVEN YOUR FEARLESS LEADERSHIP, I would pledge to you thousands of Elders and Laymen throughout the Church who will rise to stand by your side and follow where you lead** to victory for a whole Bible and a renewed and reconsecrated Church. Busy as we all truly are in these trying days, surely the great and fundamental issue, herein set forth, involving the continued existance of the historic testimony of our Church should and must merit our **considered judgment** and **prompt and decisive ACTION!**

Refuse that leadership **NOW** and those best in position to know believe, that within five, **or, at the most,** ten years, "Liberalism," "Higher Criticism," and "Modernism" will have become entrenched **and in power. I, FOR ONE, DO NOT BELIEVE OUR MINISTRY WILL FAIL THE CHURCH IN THIS CRUCIAL HOUR.**

8-31-40
9-1-40

TOM GLASGOW, Elder,

Charlotte, N. C.